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SUBJECT: TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS: SUPPLEMENTAL B-9 AND VICTIM
REGISTRATION STATISTICS FOR SIXTH ANNUAL TIP REPORT FOR THE
NETHERLANDS

REF: THE HAGUE 453

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¶1. (SBU) Summary. In an April 20th letter to Parliament, Immigration Minister Rita Verdonk reported that 430 requests for B-9 temporary residence status were received from TIP victims between 2003 and 2005. Of the 430 applications for B-9 status during this period, 334 were granted, 74 were rejected, and 22 are pending final adjudication. Separately, the Foundation Against Trafficking in Women (STV) provided post with its preliminary figures on victim registrations for 2005: 424 TIP victims were registered by STV in 2005, a modest increase from the 405 registered in ¶2004. The B-9 and TIP victim registration data reported in this cable supplements the statistics provided in post's initial submission for the 2006 Annual TIP report (reftel). End Summary.

Immigration Minister Reports Current B-9 Figures

¶2. (SBU) In her April 20 response to questions posed in September 2005 by the Second Chamber's Standing Justice Committee, Immigration Minister Verdonk provided updated information on B-9 visas in the Netherlands. B-9 visas grant temporary residence to TIP victims who assist with the investigation and prosecution of their traffickers. Verdonk reported that between 2003 and 2005, the government had received 430 requests from TIP victims for B-9 status; 334 were granted, 74 rejected, and 22 are pending final decision. Grounds for rejection included the applicant's departure from the Netherlands; the applicant's failure to follow through in pursuing charges against the trafficker; charges against the applicant for violations of public order (not TIP-related); and frivolous applications that clearly were not TIP-related. Verdonk's letter does not provide a breakdown by year of the number of applications received and granted. Verdonk noted that the recent shift of responsibility for issuing B-9 visas from local "alien registration" offices to a centralized Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND) office had delayed the compilation of statistics required to respond to the Parliamentary inquiry.

¶3. (SBU) Verdonk informed Parliament that police and immigration officials are trained to identify potential TIP victims and to inform them about the availability of the B-9

temporary residence visa for those who wish to assist in the investigation and prosecution of their traffickers. Responding to Parliamentary criticism about the adequacy of protections against possible detention and deportation of trafficking victims, Verdonk stated that she had not found evidence to indicate that police officers fail to identify TIP victims or that they discourage victims from applying for B-9 status. She noted that, over the past several years, the police have invested a great deal in providing training on victim identification and assistance procedures. Verdonk stated that it was impossible to guarantee that no potential TIP victims would ever be held in an alien detention center. She stressed, however, that several initiatives had been adopted to prevent this from happening. For example the Rotterdam-Rijnmond regional police had initiated a program to visit alien detention centers to identify potential TIP victims and encourage them to press charges against their traffickers. She agreed with Parliamentary critics that standardized procedures should be established to ensure that TIP victims would not be held in alien detention without an opportunity to request B-9 status; she indicated her intent to implement such procedures.

Preliminary 2005 TIP Victims Registration Figures

14. (SBU) Separately, on April 25, the Foundation against Trafficking in Women (STV), the designated national reporting center for TIP victim registration, provided post its preliminary figures on 2005 TIP victim registrations. In 2005, 424 TIP victims were registered, up from 405 in 2004. All but two were female. The top five countries of origin were the Netherlands (98), Bulgaria (52), Nigeria (28), Romania (23), and the Czech Republic (18). 24 of the victims were under the age of 18. Of the 424 victims registered, 218 -- 51.4 percent -- were reported to STV by the police. 47.5 percent of victims registered in 2004 were

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identified and reported to STV by the police. Final victim registration figures will be published in an STV report to be released in mid-May. Our STV contact cautioned that the some of the preliminary numbers in the report could be slightly revised as a result of the final fact-checking process. (Note. Victim registration figures reported reftel were preliminary STV figures for the first eight months of 2005. End Note.)

Comment

15. (SBU) While the centralization of responsibility for B-9 visa issuance at the IND apparently slowed the Minister's ability to obtain the data needed to respond to Parliament's request for information on B-9 issuances, we believe it is a positive step that will result in both improved procedures for B-9 adjudications and the more timely release in the future of statistics on B-9 applications and approvals. The implementation of standardized procedures for informing potential TIP victims about the option to apply for a B-9 visa should further strengthen the GONL's efforts to protect TIP victims and prosecute their traffickers. B-9 visa holders are permitted to work; however, neither the government nor NGOs that provide victim assistance maintain statistics on the number of B-9 victims who are employed or enrolled in job training programs. One NGO told us that the decision was made not to keep such records to protect the privacy of those victims who did find employment.

Arnall